DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 294 UD 018 351

AUTHOR Metz, Mary Haywood
TITLE Teachers' Adjustments to Students' Behavior: Some Implications for the Process of Desegregation.
PUB DATE 31 Mar 78
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Toronto, Canada, March 27-31, 1978) ; Best copy available

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Ability Grouping; Black Students; Case Studies (Education); Caucasian Students; Discriminatory Attitudes (Social); Homogeneous Grouping; *Integration Effects; Junior High Schools; School Integration; *Student Behavior; Student Characteristics; *Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Behavior; Teaching Styles

ABSTRACT

In an ethnographic study of three recently desegregated junior high schools, the pressures placed upon teachers by students in different academic tracks were analyzed. Students in each track were grouped homogeneously in terms of race, social class and academic performance. The methodology of this study consisted of utilizing students' responses to interview questions along with classroom observations. Though teachers' beliefs about educational goals and the proper character of the student teacher relationship varied significantly in these schools, there was as much variation in the behavior of the same teacher with different tracks as in the behavior of ideologically opposed teachers with the same track. Further, where desegregation was recent, teachers' ideologies showed significant effects from the behavior and expectations of the socially homogeneous student bodies in the schools where they had taught before desegregation. A conclusion of this study is that when desegregation brings sudden and significant changes in not only the racial but also the social and academic attributes of students, the adjustments required of the faculty in both educational theory and daily practice are an important factor in the social changes which will occur in the school. (Author/GC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

22.04

ED155294

TEACHERS' ADJUSTMENTS TO STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR: SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROCESS OF DESEGREGATION

Mary Haywood Metz

Marquette University

and

Mount Mary College

A paper prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, March 27-31, 1978 in Toronto.

Printed in USA

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UD018351

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Mary Haywood Metz

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

TEACHERS' ADJUSTMENTS TO STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR:
SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROCESS OF DESEGREGATION

A great deal of attention has recently been given to the effects of teachers' expectations upon the attitudes, learning, and consequent fate of students. Rosenthal and Jackson's dramatic study of the effects of experimentally induced teacher expectations (1968) started a controversy which led to a spate of research which has both qualified and supported their findings (Brophy and Good, 1974). Ogbu (1974) has demonstrated that teachers' expectations may lead even parents to modify their behavior to fit stereotypes in order to protect their children's position vis-a-vis their teachers. Considerably less attention has been paid to the ways in which students' expectations may shape the attitudes and actions of teachers. But there have long been scattered intimations, that students do affect the behavior of their teachers in a systematic manner.

Twenty-five years ago, Becker's study of the career patterns of Chicago public school teachers indicated such effects as perceived by the teachers and inferred by Becker. Becker (1952a; 1952b) found that the teachers had clearly defined images of the character of students in various parts of the city, distinguished by social class. They preferred children from the lower middle class areas because they were more conforming than either inner city or well to do children. There was a pattern of migration of teachers toward the lower middle class areas as seniority allowed them to transfer. But some who were unable to transfer in their first years of teaching became adjusted to their initial assignments and preferred to remain there. Thus his study suggests that students' behavior affects teachers' behavior both through selective recruitment or retention of teachers with varying styles, and through socialization of teachers to styles which fit their circumstances.

Wax, Wax, and Dumont's study (1964) of Indian children at home on the reservation and in the local white run school concentrates upon the changes in behavior of the children as they moved into the school situation. But it also deals with the distinctive patterns of activity developed by the teachers in response to consistent school behavior which they believed to reflect the children's inherent character. More descriptive accounts by Herndon (1965) and Wolcott (1967) suggest that inner city black students and rural Indian students demand that new teachers conform to the (strikingly similar) patterns they have come to expect.

More general analytic studies which deal with the nature of classroom interaction in the context of the organizational structures common to public schools (Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975) suggest that both the flow of activity within the classroom and the limitations placed upon the

classroom by the wider school shape students' and teachers' behavior separately and in interpenetration. Gracey (1972) and Corwin (1973) deal at length with the difficulties experienced by teachers who attempted significantly to change these patterns of interaction, difficulties which arose (among other things) from the physical, temporal, and social structure of the school, from the expectations of students, and from the behavior patterns of students.

Thus, the idea that students affect teachers' behavior is not novel, but it has only begun to be explored. In this paper, I will report on a study of three recently desegregated junior high schools where tracking in academic subjects produced strikingly different groups of students under the same roof.[1] Despite significant differences in the educational philosophy and previous experiences of the teachers in this study, the behavior of different teachers with classes of the same track level was frequently more similar than the behavior of the same teacher with classes of different track levels. But because the teachers did not see one another in the classroom, and because many were pushed to behave in ways which were discrepant from those they preferred, they were often unaware of their convergent adjustments.

All three schools were in a single community, "Canton." Canton is a city of roughly 100,000 within a cosmopolitan urban complex. It is home to a large university and serves as a bedroom community for many managers and professionals who work throughout the urban area. It contains several census tracts with a median education of sixteen or more years. Supported by the university and light industry, it lacks a large white working class. Nonetheless, twenty-five percent of the population, and forty-one per cent of the public school children, are black, most of them from working and lower class families. Consequently, despite the presence of some black children from highly educated families and substantial number of whites from middle status families, the schools were dominated by working class blacks and professional whites. The IQ distribution, reflecting both social background and academic skill, was bimodal with one mode well above average and another at or just below it. Classes in academic subjects were separated into five tracks, Honors and One through Four. Thus study focused on the top two and bottom two tracks which were filled primarily with children from the two dominant groups.[2]

Because of the system's desire not to be discriminatory, each subject was tracked independently and students performing well were often transferred to a higher track level in the middle of the year. Consequently the middle track was socially diverse. But the top two tracks remained predominantly, though by no means exclusively, populated with the children of well educated whites. The bottom two tracks, Three and Four, included only students who were unwilling or unable to perform reliably in work at their grade level. These students were thus more homogeneous in academic and social characteristics than they would have been had they been sorted simply by neighborhood of residence.

The district was especially informative as a setting for the study of effects of students upon teachers for two reasons. First, there was unusual diversity between and homogeneity within tracks which gave classes a particularly varied and distinctive social and academic character. Second,

district policy strongly encouraged assigning every teacher classes across the full range of track levels. Consequently, it was possible to observe a series of classes with individual teachers whose personalities remained constant through a day while the markedly different behavior of their classes elicited changes in their own behavior. Data on students' and teachers' behavior were gathered by following individual students and teachers through a whole class day. Teachers were interviewed after these observations. A sample of students were interviewed as well, chosen in a purposive sample which balanced their dominant track level, gender, race, and disciplinary record. Many but not all of the students interviewed were ones who had engaged in memorable interactions in classes observed.[3]

The major theme of this paper, the teachers' adjustments to the students, requires the reader to have some knowledge of the students' attitudes toward their classes and even more important of their behavior patterns within the confines of the classrooms' space and time.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Students in the top tracks were generally engaged with the school and with its academic tasks. They believed the school was there to further their intellectual growth, and they expected it to act as a benevolent agent in that task. They also expected to have some part--though by no means the sole part--in defining the nature of that growth. A cardinal tenet of their common philosophy was the importance of discussion and of establishing relationships between classroom material and wider issues of interest to students. They thus tended to resent teachers who "teach straight from the book" or constantly ask them to "memorize." They expected their observations and opinions to be taken seriously. They did make exceptions for subjects like math, however, where they thought "learning it straight from the book" might be a necessary, if mundane, approach.

The students in top tracks expected to be treated as junior partners. If they questioned a teacher's procedures they expected a justification from the teacher. An exhortation not to question but simply to obey an adult would quickly draw their wrath. And in disciplinary issues they expected the psychic state and emotional needs of the student to be considered along with the character of the deed and its consequences.

When these conditions were met, these students could be diligent as well as imaginative. But when they were not, they could engage in considerable passive or active rebellion.

The students in the bottom tracks lacked the sense of proprietorship in the school which was so marked among the high track students. In fact, most of them failed to see any justification for performing the tasks the school required except that the school demanded them--for its own mysterious reasons. Teachers' job was to set the tasks and students' to perform them. That was "the way it spozed to be" (Herndon, 1965). But the students were profoundly ambivalent about this official world of the school. They acknowledged its legitimacy unreservedly, and they even accepted teachers who were "mean" as an inevitable part of the system so long as they were

consistently mean to all students. But they withheld their cooperation much of the time, despite the system's legitimacy. And they tested, teased, and ignored their teachers on a daily basis while never denying the appropriateness of the teachers' efforts to restore their compliance.

The order of the school was socially right. It must be; it was a given of existence sanctioned by the wider society. But it also had little connection to these students' present world or future expectations. They were motivated to comply more by abstract norms than by the pressures of individual ambition, intrinsic interest, or group approval. When abstract norms and these other pressures ran counter to one another, the norms proved weak determiners of behavior. Yet, since the school was socially right, the students were, they felt, socially wrong. But this knowledge was as likely to lead to restless teasing as to conformity.

In such a setting the ultimate test of a teacher was his persistent good faith in trying to get the students to learn in the highly traditional terms in which they understood that process. A teacher who passed this test would still be teased or ignored, but the tone would be good-natured and the students would maintain limits upon their nonconformity. A teacher who failed this test could face endemic restless hostility.

In both the top and bottom tracks the tone of the class was set by a few active leaders who held the attitudes of the group in more pronounced form than most and who articulated them more forcefully. In both cases these students seemed to be capable and imaginative. (In the lower tracks capable but rebellious students had considerable time and energy to spare.) There was also in each set of students a large number who were more passive in their orientation to the school. They accepted its legitimacy unreflectively and they did not question teachers' requests unless these were outside the bounds of normal procedure for the school. While these students were numerous, they were also quiet, followers rather than leaders. It was the leaders who set the tone for most classes.

STUDENTS' CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

From the point of view of teachers, students' behavior is even more important than their attitudes. The two are naturally closely linked. But as the teachers attempt to navigate their way productively through a five hour class day, they deal most proximately with behavior. It is only when they find the time that they reflect upon attitudes and upon ways in which they might be able to get behind or around the problems presented by students' behavior to change or build upon those attitudes. In order to understand teachers' adjustments to differences among their students, then, it is the students' behavior which we must study most closely.

For teachers one of the most important aspects of students' behavior is the challenges which all classes make as they get to know a teacher and attempt to establish patterns to their own liking in areas of disagreement. Teachers in Canton were systematically questioned about these challenges, and all agreed that they were a fundamental fact of classroom interaction.

Most agreed that students in Tracks Three and Four posed theirs primarily through overt physical or verbal disorder, while those in Track One and Honors classes most often test the teacher's mastery of the subject and related intellectual matters.

A teacher who had considerable experience as a substitute and so had seen and dealt with a larger number of classes of each track than most teachers, gave the following interpretation:

> Maybe I'm oversimplifying, but I think people challenge teachers in an area which the child is good. If it's a slow class they will challenge him physically or verbally, and if it's a bright class they will challenge him intellectually.
>
> It's a very rough assignment to take an Honors class as a substitute teacher because you're faced with thirty-five wise guys. And it's a rough assignment to take a Third Track because everyone suddenly becomes more destructive, walks around more, throws balls. I think they just present you with what they're good at.
>
> (The Honors kids will) let you get started and they'll correct every word that you pronounce poorly. If there're two ways to say something and you say it one way, they will <u>really</u> fight for it being done the other way.

This teacher has illustrated the style in which top level children give their challenges. The following excerpt from observations illustrates a case in which a boy in a Track Four class completely disrupted a relatively orderly math class with clever use of physical action about which the teacher could do little.

> Most of the students were paying attention to what Mrs. Theobold was doing on the board, and the room was pretty much quiet except for her talking and their replies. There was a bit of desultory whispering and some shuffling and movement . . .
>
> But while they were still working on the board there was a commotion around Charles, who said he couldn't get his foot unstuck from the chair in front of him. A couple of boys gave some advice. Then a thin girl in the front row said, "Silly, just turn your foot sideways." But that didn't work. She went over to him to offer serious help, and the class started to gather around.
>
> Mrs. Theobold did not try to get their attention back but watched as the foot was struggled with. Charles seemed to be playing a skillful game. He gave signals that he was genuinely stuck, genuinely in difficulty. But when someone would make a suggestion or actually move the foot, he would cooperate with an expression which indicated pleasure with all the attention, yet was not an obvious grin of delight.

> Then he would yelp in pain, with comic effect, and yet not so loudly or dramatically that the teacher could accuse him of pretense. He made the situation dramatic and funny and became the center of class attention, yet he underplayed his role enough so that it stayed within the bounds of legitimacy despite his comic actions.
>
> The whole class got to grinning, even the initially scornful girl.

Even when the children in the top and bottom tracks engaged in explicitly disallowed behavior in class, there was a difference in the kind of misbehavior they chose. A teacher described the boisterous, expressive, and public character of the disallowed behavior in the lower tracks, in contrast to the more private and quieter play of children in top tracks who don't pay attention:

> Usually the Level Fours are just generally disruptive. They're boisterous or they're out of their desks or they're very active in some very overt way: they'll yell across the room or they'll bang on the desk, drum on the desk, this kind of thing.
>
> Whereas the Level Ones will do sneaky things more. They might shoot rubber bands, they'll go through a period of this, or throw paper wads, or they might be playing games with each other. This kind of thing. It's usually quietly distractive. Primarily the problem is that they're not paying attention and the people that they're doing it with aren't. It's not disruptive to the whole class, usually.

Reference to the "sneaky" quality of the high track white children's misbehavior was common. They would break rules because there was something else they wanted to do, or to "get away with something," not to tease the teacher openly or to challenge the rule in itself. The black children in the lower tracks seemed more often to break rules openly and partly for the fun of flouting a rule or the teacher. This difference seemed to be associated with race independent of track level. Since the top tracks were mostly white and the bottom virtually all black, race was an integral part of their difference. But the racial difference was nicely illustrated independent of track in one incident in which two boys in the middle track were asked by a teacher to come after school because they had left class a minute early at the "warning bell" which preceded the end of each class at one school. The following account and analysis are from field notes:

> The two boys whom Miss L. had told to come back for detention came hurrying in very shortly after the end of ninth period, which ends at 3:15. One, Dan, was a tall, dark, good-looking black boy. The other, John, was a short white boy.
>
> Dan came in now, talking the minute he entered the door. How long did they have to stay, he asked. "I just have to be home by 3:30." His parents were counting on it, he said. Miss L. said "Then you can tell your parents why you are late." She

said they would have to stay until 3:20. (The idea was to make up the time they were shaving off class.)

But Dan was not to be stopped. He went on, saying, "You never told us we couldn't leave at the first bell. We've been doing it all along and you never said anything."

Miss L. replied that Dan knew very well he was not supposed to leave at the first bell.

"But we've done it anyway, and you never said anything before," he persisted.

"Well . . ." she said, hesitating.

Dan decided to press this home. "Most of us leave then," he added.

Miss L. smiled at this. It was plainly not true; she evidently thought it possible that some had been getting out, but this was clearly an excuse. "No" she said.

So Dan tried again. His parents would be terribly angry he said. He just had to get home. And besides it's not fair keeping us here for something we didn't even do!

"Now wait," said Miss L. "You just said you do it every day!"

Dan smiled at being fairly caught in this inconsistency, but drew breath for another try.

John intervened, "Be quiet! Or we'll never get out of here!" (Not exact quote, but the idea is.)

But Dan was not to be quelled. "I've got a paper route and I've got to get started on it."

John cut in, "That doesn't start until four!"

"But I have to get started or I won't get through on time!" countered Dan.

"You have until five, and you know it!" replied John with some heat. He seemed surprised, amused, but somewhat outraged too at Dan's cheerful fibbing.

Dan was silent just a moment with his confederate now also on the attack. John put in, "Since I've been good can I go?"

Miss L. replied, "When are you going to leave tomorrow?"

"After the second bell," said John.

Dan mumbled another reply which I couldn't hear, something like, "When I want to."

"All right, you can go," Miss L. told John. She asked Dan again, "When are you going to leave tomorrow?"

"After the second bell," replied Dan meekly.

"All right." Miss L. nodded. Both boys left. It was 3:19.

This whole exchange occurred with good humor on all sides. Dan affected a voice of desperation, but there was always a light touch implied in his tone . . . He may indeed have lightened his sentence by being so good-humored in his pretended distraction. Since Miss L. had some sense of humor and of proportion, Dan made it hard for her to take her administration of punishment much more seriously than she could take his protestations.

This anecdote is a lovely illustration of the different styles of the black and white children . . . Dan does not take either his crime or his punishment too seriously, but he is willing to use any handy device to get out of the punishment if possible. He enjoys playing on the teacher's character; her insecurity about possible oversights, her sense of fairness, her sympathy, her sense of humor. The white boy, on the other hand, feels it dangerous to be anything but outwardly penitent and ready for reform. Whether he actually is any more penitent than Dan is quite another question.

Dan makes the crime and punishment the occasion for a friendly contest, risking in the game the possibility of receiving a heavier punishment. John is intent upon his separate purposes and soberly seeks the most efficient means of evading the teacher.

In the daily rhythm of classes, the lower track groups were far more restless and subject to collective activity distracting from the lesson at hand than the top track ones were. It was harder for the teacher simply to get their attention. All tracks (and meetings of teachers for that matter) would break out into conversation if there were periods when nothing was happening, for instance if they had to wait while the teacher performed some mechanical chore. But in top track classes, it was often possible for the teacher to start or resume the class by simply starting to speak about the material; silence would fall on its own. In lower track classes it was necessary to call for attention and even then it was harder to get.

Further, top track students responded more quickly to simple reprimands for inappropriate activity, and, if the teacher was firm, were less likely to start again as soon as the teacher's attention was elsewhere. In a lower track class one or more children might engage intermittently in disallowed behavior throughout the whole period. Keeping the level of distracting activity at a low level, without trying to eliminate it, could require a good deal of a teacher's energy in such a class.

However, cooperation even in the top tracks was not automatic. But it could be established for the week, the month, or the year with only brief efforts necessary to strengthen it, while in lower track classes it frequently had to be negotiated daily, if not several times daily.

A black teacher, sympathetic to the lower track children, described the tracks on this matter:

> But, of course, you have to get down with the Three Level[4] as far as discipline is concerned. You have to yell and scream and hit them over the head and then kiss them. This is about the only way to handle the situation. They cannot conform to someone who insists upon their sitting in their seats and staying there and having their paper and having their pencil and no humor; they have to have humor. They have to be able to laugh at me; I have to be able to laugh at them. And, you have to kind of play it by ear. A One group, you don't have to worry about this too much because all you have to do is raise your voice and say, "Sit down" and they do it. But if you don't, they will make 6th period (her most difficult group of Threes) look like a dream in comparison. If you sit back and let them go, a One group will chase you right out of the room. And they're capable of doing it.

TEACHERS' ARRANGEMENT OF CLASSROOM ROUTINE

Canton's teachers were self-conscious in their pedagogical approaches to the classroom task in general and to distinctive groups of children in particular. But there was little consensus among them. In fact in two of the three schools, there was considerable overt conflict between teachers of differing persuasions. At the third such conflict was always a potential which teachers and principal carefully avoided.

Yet despite these pronounced differences in conscious aims and methods, the differences between teachers of different philosophies with the same track were on the whole smaller than differences between teachers of the same philosophy with different tracks. Teachers adjusted in considerable measure to their students. They did not always make these adjustments consciously and they certainly did not always experience their actions as an adjustment in which the students determined their behavior. Nor were the adjustments always in the directions indicated by the best interests or desires of the students, if one considers those in a broad context. What the adjustments did was to allow the teachers to get through their class hours with a minimum of overt conflict and with the maximum amount of academic effort they considered possible.

The following two descriptions of a teacher's adaptation to the characteristics of the students come from a social studies teacher who believed in teaching around the children's interests and an English teacher who believed in presenting a traditional curriculum in a straightforward manner. But their behavior becomes similar as each adjusts to students' behavior. The social studies teacher said:

> Groups One and Two . . . I try to conduct as oral discussions, interaction with students, you know, "express your own idea." And everybody, I hope, if they want to, has a chance to talk. Because they seem to be able to handle it without getting too far out of line. I think that's really important in social sciences that people be able to talk and discuss things. But in Threes and Fours I find it very difficult to do it that way. I use a worksheet and work around this, and this keeps the kids more in control. I don't use the discussion method a lot because it seems to really get out of hand then. A little bit at a time I do, and then I'll cut it off and we'll do the worksheet. So I guess maybe that I notice in One and Two they have the ability to somewhat control themselves in a situation where it's more free and they can discuss orally. They seem to be able to handle it without a fight starting or something. And in Threes and Fours you make it more structured, give them a worksheet, cut down on the amount of oral discussion that is going on.

The traditional English teacher expressed her experience and strategy thus.

> I have found, of course, that dictionary work with Threes, par larly, has been successful. They love it. They like to be busy. Isn't that strange? They like to be able to sit down, open a book, and work on something. . . .
>
> Discussion--they haven't been able to handle too well. (Hesitation) Because its' still, "Let's outshout one another." I tried discussions with them and found them unsuccessful. I keep trying a little of it but cutting it down, making it pretty short to get kids to express their ideas, but never anything more than five minutes because they go completely up and they won't relate to the subject material at all. They will relate particularly on a personal basis. And of course this is part of the difficulty anyway. What I did in connection with such and such a thing, or what my mother did, or my girl friend or boy friend, or something of this nature. They cannot state a situation where they are not directly involved.

The use of much written and individual work in lower level classes was partly a technological response to the constant threat or presence of distracting activity. One child making editorial comments or even just talking to his neighbor can effectively destroy a lecture or discussion for everyone. But if students are working individually it is possible for those so inclined to progress with their work despite the colorful or noisy activities of one or more others. The use of written work and its constant presence during discussions was a means of allowing some students to learn while others played. It also provided a way to focus, yet divide the class's attention, thus decreasing the likelihood of collective play or teasing arising out of a group discussion. Teachers usually kept their plans flexible in lower level classes, and if the tempo of irrelevant activity started rising so high that the whole class was likely to become involved, they would often cut short collective activity and assign

individual written work. In the class cited above where the boy artfully involved the whole class in the drama of his foot and the chair, the teacher brought her lecture to an earlier close and gave more time for the class to work examples than in another class at the same level on the same day where such a collective distraction did not arise.

Still, teachers used structured written work as a device to quiet a class or to keep it calm partly because most students in Tracks Three and Four actively preferred this kind of work. Several teachers mentioned that other teachers--never themselves--kept orderly classrooms in lower level classes by giving the students well-structured assignments, sometimes even on material already thoroughly covered, which did not challenge or teach them but at which they were happy to work quietly.[5]

Most teachers took both this preference for written work and the boisterousness of the lower level students at face value. But it is important to consider how these pieces of behavior relate to the students' definition of the school and their relationship with it.

Structured written assignments are less mentally taxing than more open ended tasks; they are more manageable for children who lack the ability or inclination to take on more challenge. But more important they are private activities; a student's mistakes are not publicly visible as they are in oral recitation.

Such tasks also involve less of the student's whole person than do either unstructured or oral tasks. He need involve less of his mind to find a right answer to a specific question than to respond imaginatively to a broad one. And he exposes far less of himself to social scrutiny in writing down a short answer than in responding orally to a teacher, a situation where the tone of certainty or uncertainty, meekness or defiance with which his answer is delivered will be visible to both the teacher and his peers. Exchange and discussion with classmates which includes opinion and debate exposes even more of a student's person to public view. For students who lack academic confidence, it is much safer to confine academic activities to the narrowest, most private, space available.

These students seemed to prefer a fixed daily and weekly routine. They would ask explicitly for clarification of the routine and for confirmation that it was being followed. And they would object to doing a given kind of task at other than the appointed part of the hour or week. According to teachers they would also become much more active, talkative, and disorderly whenever some unexpected event created a departure from usual procedure. In a situation where they feel unsure of themselves, the presence of routine protects them from unexpected situations which they fear they may not be able to cope with effectively. Further, since the school is experienced by most of these students as part of a racially and socially alien world, as well as one which demands skills they lack, both routine activities and a routine schedule have the advantage of minimizing the thought, effort, and personal commitment which they must invest in a threatening context.

The generally alien character of the mainstream society is often embodied for the student in the person of the teachers. Further, teachers' own self-esteem is threatened if their students fail to make significant

academic progress. They may escape negative reflection upon themselves through vehement blame of the children or radical downward adjustment of expectations mixed with an attitude of condescension. Either attitude will be painful for students to receive. They can protect themselves a little from the teacher and his image of them by engaging only in highly structured routine academic activity in which they neither invest nor expose themselves.[6]

These students' boisterous tone and frequent clowning in class likewise protect them from a negative image. If a student jokes and clowns in class, he defines both the situation and his own performance in it as matters to be taken lightly, as not appropriate for taking the measure of his serious worth or capabilities.[7]

TEACHERS' RESPONSE TO DISTRACTIONS

Not only did teachers make similar alterations in the kind of activity classes engaged in according to academic track, they also made similar alterations in the way that they treated officially inappropriate activity. The atmosphere of the class hour and the relationship of teacher and students werequite different in the top and the bottom level classes.

With all teachers there was a certain air of intensity in the top level classes. The children were expected to pay close attention at all times except during administrative lulls such as the passing back of papers. The pace of activity was brisk; teachers would discourage any quiet whispering or even silent inattention as soon as they noticed it. In general the students did in fact pay good attention and engage in little non-academic byplay.

In the lower level classes the atmosphere was in one sense more relaxed. The pace of activity was slower and there was considerably more inattention, conversation, and often even movement about the room. The teachers would reprimand the perpetrators of these activities if they were prolonged or especially disruptive, but they did not attempt to eliminate them altogether as they did in the top level classes.

However, in another sense the top level classes were the more relaxed. A child who engaged in some physical activity such as throwing spitballs would be mildly told to stop; one who made an angry outburst or mocking comment at the teacher might be only coldly ignored. But in the bottom level classes overt teasing of others or disrespectful comments toward the teacher were treated far more peremptorily and severely. Teachers were often articulate about these differences in their treatment of different groups. For example, one observed:

> R: Of course sometimes you will allow in a Group Three something you wouldn't allow with an Honors student. And conversely, sometimes you allow an Honors student to do something that you couldn't condone in a Track Two because of the tone of the class and so on. For instance, an Honors student might do something which if done in a Track Two class would really upset the whole group.

I: What would be an example of something like that?

R: Oh, jumping up and taking somebody else's book. You know, some sort of overt act. Or even saying something to the teacher in a tone of voice which in a lower track would be regarded by the other kids as a victory over the teacher. In an Honors group it might be regarded simply as bad manners on the part of the student and so would need to be dealt with differently.

It seemed that with the top children the main focus for disciplinary sanctions was attention to academic work, while with the children in the bottom tracks the main focus for disciplinary acts was displays of anger or attempts to rile either other students or the teacher. Consequently, it was with the very children who were most reluctant to engage in academic work that the teachers exerted least disciplinary pressure in that direction.

There seem to have been two general reasons for this difference in the teachers' focus with each track. First, with the top tracks the ground of battle, even when students were truly furious with a teacher, was likely to be academic work. The students in the lower level classes lacked the skill and confidence for such attacks and so always expressed their anger in non-academic challenges. In the top tracks a teacher could therefore keep his focus in the academic realm even when he was in serious conflict with a student. The conflicts were not consequently easy to handle. On the contrary, the students often chose academic ground for their battles because it was very difficult for a teacher to pin down punishable actions. The students would spend considerable energy plotting strategy and weaving traps into which an unwary teacher could easily fall.

The following example is typical. This student, Eleanor Starling, was in Honors groups. She had come in conflict with her Spanish teacher after the teacher had encouraged her to write a play in Spanish for presentation in class, but had changed her mind after it was written and not allowed Eleanor to present it. Eleanor described what happened next:

I just couldn't stand her and she couldn't stand me. And I'd do anything I could to make her mad. And so I'd put my head down on my desk and I'd pretend I was asleep, but I'd be ready at all times.

Like we were supposed to study these four paragraphs about Mexico City. So I was sitting there (with my head down) and so she pulls my name out of the deck of cards and says 'Eleanor Starling describe as much as you can about Mexico City.' So I just recited off four paragraphs (laughs) with the book closed. She was kind of floored. It was really a sense of satisfaction.

And I got a very high grade on that. I think I got the only A in the two eighth grade classes on this one test. So she's just lost all hope of outdoing me.

A student in a lower track class finding himself or herself equally furious at a teacher would be much more likely to express it with loud angry protests on the spot than to plan a drawn out but quiet vendetta. Lesser anger would be likely to be expressed with noisy talk or play or sullen non-cooperation. These styles of response were far more likely to induce classmates to join in the conflict than were the conflicts in the top tracks which might not even be clearly interpretable to classmates.

The second reason for the difference in teachers' use of restraining sanctions with the different levels was the much greater volatility of the lower tracks. Since the children in the top tracks generally embraced the academic goals of the school and expected most teachers to represent them in good faith, conflicts in most classes were individual matters. But in the bottom tracks where most of the children felt divorced from the school's values and accustomed to conflict with the teachers who represented them, a conflict between one student and the teacher was much more likely to ignite the whole group into rebellion. Those few teachers who seriously violated upper track students' expectations of the teachers' role had to deal also with general volatility in response to single conflicts.

In responding to outbursts of anger or really noisy diversion in the lower track classes the teachers used stronger disciplinary measures than they usually used at all in higher track classes. A census of all referrals to the dean (sending a child out of class to the disciplinary officer) from September to January reflected this pattern. The vast majority were for children in Tracks Three and Four. Most of the rest of the referrals were for black students in Track Two, many of whom share the social characteristics of those in the lower tracks.[9]

Because there was so much distracting activity in these classes, the teachers had to employ restraining comments and devices fairly frequently simply to prevent uproar. These actions used up their resources for control, which were especially slim in these classes because of the students' lack of spontaneous attachment to the academic enterprise. Consequently, they did not have capital left to push children to academic effort. At best they established enough quiet so that those who wanted to work could do so.

But the teachers never talked in terms of the allocation of limited resources for control. They simply observed that the students in the lower track classes would not stand for too much pressure to get them to do their work. Academic pressure, they said, had to be applied gently, indirectly, intermittently. But their statements carry the unspoken implication that too much direct pressure will so raise the level of noisy distraction that it will defeat its very purpose.

In practice, if not in intent, the teachers engage in exchange with the lower level classes. The teacher permits inattention to the academic task and minor breaches of classroom etiquette in exchange for the students' willingness to refrain from really disruptive noisy activity or overt angry attack upon the teacher.

Such an exchange may allow every one to get through the hour without unduly intruding upon one another. But it does not result in the most academic progress for the majority of students. Some teachers tried to alter the pattern, either through better sources of coercive control or, more frequently, through increasing students' intrinsic interest in the academic task. But most found it very difficult to change the pattern significantly. And in fact there was evidence that over a long time teachers gradually come to adopt an educational philosophy which justifies the strategies that yield the minimum of conflict with the students of the schools they find themselves in.

THE MATCHING OF TEACHERS' STYLES WITH DISTINCTIVE STUDENT BODIES

It was mentioned earlier that teachers made the adjustments they did to the students despite significant differences in their ideas about the proper ends and means of teaching. Indeed they differed significantly over the very meaning of the educative process, over the inherent nature of children in general and junior high school students in particular, and over the proper relationship between teacher, student, and material. But these differences were not randomly distributed. While they clearly were related to deep seated elements in each teacher's personal view of life, for those with long experience they were also significantly (not perfectly) correlated with the character of the student body at the school where they had been teaching prior to desegregation.

One junior high school in Canton, Darwin, had served a predominantly working class, predominantly black, constituency. Another, Hamilton, had served an overwhelmingly white constituency which drew heavily from the most affluent and educated parts of the city. The third, Chauncey, had been naturally desegregated, serving a socially as well as racially varied student body.

The correlation of teachers' educational philosophy with the character of the student body may well have been primarily a result of transfer among these schools, although this was difficult to document. In any case, Darwin had an unusually large number of teachers who believed children had no interest in co-operating with the academic aims of a school and should be systematically forced to learn. Hamilton, on the other hand, had a large cadre of teachers who believed that any decent student should docilely accept the structured curriculum as it unfolded without either hijinks or debate. These were teachers of long years of experience who had formed their picture of children and teaching with the accepting college bound students of an earlier time. Chauncey's teachers, long used to a mixed student body, were less ideological and more pragmatic in their approach to teaching.

In the years following desegregation, the central administration had hired a group of energetic young teachers who emphasized teaching with an emphasis upon the interests of the students. They were well matched with the style of the (newly) questionning upper track students, but they were also dedicated to making real progress with the lower track students. With the latter, they tried in various ways to break through the patterns discussed

above, but they attained only modest success.

The administration assigned these teachers primarily to Darwin and Hamilton where they thought teachers with such interests and capabilities were most needed. One result was conflict in both faculties as both older and newer teachers blamed the disturbing influence of the other for their classroom difficulties. But significantly, the tone and focus of the debate was different at the two schools. At Darwin, the older teachers were most disturbed by what they perceived as spoiled rich children unwilling to sit still and listen. At Hamilton, the older teachers were most disturbed by problems of physical disorder.[9] Both saw the newer teachers' looser style and greater willingness to listen to students' opinions and suggestions as a basic source of their own problems with the students. But, while these diverse faculty practices did affect the students, it was easier for teachers in both situations to blame other teachers than the children. In the first case some teachers who had been leaders in the faculty culture at Darwin were obviously unsure of their academic competence in their new high track classes, a fact which students quickly underscored for them. They were not eager to discuss such problems. And older teachers at Hamilton were uncomfortable and unable to exert firm control in the face of the energetic physical and verbal restlessness of black lower track students, a fact they were equally reluctant to discuss lest they be labeled as racists.

These differences in the faculty cultures suggest that faculty sort themselves into schools where their skills and attitudes toward education are suited to the student body, and that experience tends to re-enforce, or in some cases to change their orientation. Distinctive student bodies and their faculties reach stable though not necessarily satisfying patterns of interaction. A change in student body without a change in faculty will seriously disrupt the teachers' patterns and will require considerable readjustment on their part. That readjustment can be expected to be painful for students, colleagues and the changing faculty themselves.

Perhaps even more striking than these long term accomodations of faculty to students, are the short term ones described in the major part of this paper. Even the energetic young teachers who came to Canton's schools hoping to work effectively with lower track students by capturing their interests and being sensitive to their individual and social needs, fell into the patterns described above. They allowed high track students more wide ranging discussions and supplied a greater variety of materials and approaches than did other teachers. They pushed lower track students a little harder toward academic effort while demanding less quiet and respectfulness. But their difference from other teachers, in practice, was one of degree not of kind. Like the other teachers, they differed more in their own treatment of students of different tracks than they differed from teachers in their treatment of the same track.

CONCLUSION

This study suggests that impersonal social processes have overwhelming importance in the interaction of teachers and students in the classroom. Lower track students in Canton responded to the classroom situation in strongly patterned ways which were reminiscent of those described among poorly performing minority students elsewhere. Elements in their cultural and social situation combine with the distinctive physical, temporal, social,

and academic character of the ordinary public school classroom to produce distinctive patterns of behavior among such students. The students' behavior in combination with the spatial, temporal, social, and academic demands of the classroom situation elicits remarkably similar behavior from teachers in response. The difficulty of breaking through despair and resistance in such classes does not lie solely in the personal and social characteristics of their teachers. Still, it is probable that these classes' behavior patterns work to retain those teachers who are least troubled by their consequent adjustments, downplaying academic effort and progress. Similarly, the high academic demands of students like those in Canton's high tracks and their demands for individual consideration, re-enforced by strategies for revenge, will drive out academically incompetent teachers.

This study also suggests that when court-ordered desegregation or administrative decisions radically alter the social and academic characteristics of a significant part of a student body, teachers will be subjected to considerable strain. A new style of teaching, of relating to students, will be required of them. Still, there are supposed to be benefits for students from this very fact. And for some there are. In Canton, those students who probably benefited most from the reorganization were black students from poor areas initially in low track classes who conformed, performed well and were moved into middle and upper track classes where teachers pushed and expected good academic performance. On the other hand, teachers at Hamilton who could not handle lower track classes sometimes became hostile and derisive not only to the class as a whole but to individuals--as the old hands at Darwin were not likely to be. And, high track classes suffered from teachers who had lost (or never had) the competence to handle their academic needs.

When such changes in school composition occur, administrators and communities should be aware of the strains placed on teachers and offer them some assistance. Canton's teachers' frequent frustration and anger toward colleagues and students were understandable. Teachers facing new student bodies must deal with powerful new constraints which they often neither anticipate nor fully comprehend. If the changes they experience are to have benefits for the students, then the breaking up of old adjustments should be accompanied by some discussion of the most constructive way to adopt new adjustments.

NOTES

1. One of the three schools, Darwin, was used for a pilot study and thus studied more briefly and less systematically than the other two.

2. Readers interested in more detail about the setting, the interpenetration of classroom activity with the character of each school as a whole, and the methods of the research will find these matters treated in Metz, (In press).

3. Data for the study were also gleaned from observations in the public spaces of the school and in teachers' gathering places, from records and documents, and from interviews with counselors and administrators. Further discussion of methods is available in Metz (In press).

4. Tracks had been officially renamed "ability groups" in the year of the study. And they were often referred to--as here--as Levels.

5. Herbert Kohl (1967) found that his Harlem sixth graders liked to use a social studies book with structured written exercises even though they would not learn the material it presented which described an American life quite alien to their experience. Wolcott (1967) found an Indian child might prefer "doing reading", that is staring at an incomprehensible reader, to reading easier individual stories which were engrossing.

6. Kohl (1967) and Herndon(1965) describe this pattern vividly in classrooms of black inner city children on the east and west coasts in the sixth and seventh grades. Wax, Wax, and Dumont (1964) and Wolcott (1967) describe a similar pattern among rural Indian children.

7. Herndon (1965) gives a dramatic example of this use of clowning, as he describes the behavior of four students in his seventh grade class who could not even read their names. Each refused to admit that he could not read and each was adroit at creating humorous diversion when called upon to read in class. However, one learned to read during the course of the year and then poured forth his former painful feelings to the class, according to Herndon, like a reformed sinner or alcoholic.

8. Race was a very important factor here. Some teachers associated black children with classroom disruption. They sent from the room children who had no conflict at all with other teachers. On the other side, some black children were particularly sensitive to sleights because of their experience of being criticized for their race. They might take offense at a teacher's action and enter into conflict with him when otherwise similar white children would not have.

9. The details of the history of the schools and the policies of the principals played a part in the patterns of faculty culture as well. See Metz (In press).

REFERENCES

Becker, Howard. "The Career of the Chicago Public School Teacher." American Journal of Sociology 57 (March 1952a): 470-77.

_____. "Social Class Variations in the Teacher-Pupil Relationship." Journal of Educational Sociology 25 (April 1952b): 451-65.

Brophy, Jere E. and Thomas L. Good. Teacher-Student Relationships: Causes and Consequences. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1974.

Corwin, Ronald G. Reform and Organizational Survival: The Teacher Corps as an Instrument of Social Change. New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1973.

Gracey, Harry L. Curriculum or Craftsmanship: Elementary School Teachers In a Bureaucratic System. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Hargreaves, David H. Social Relations in a Secondary School. London: Routledge, and Kegan Paul, 1967.

Jackson, Philip. Life in Classrooms. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968.

Kohl, Herbert. 36 Children. New York: The New American Library, 1967.

Lortie, Dan C. Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Metz, Mary Haywood. Classrooms and Corridors: The Crisis of Authority in Desegregated Secondary Schools. Berkeley: University of California Press, (In press).

Ogbu, John. The Next Generation: An Ethnography of Education in an Urban Neighborhood. New York: Academic Press, 1974.

Rosenthal, Robert and Lenore Jacobson. Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectation and Pupil's Intellectual Development. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Wax, Murray L., Rosalie H. Wax, and Robert V. Dumont, Jr. "Formal Education in an American Indian Community." An SSSP Monograph supplement to Social Problems, vol. 11, no. 4 (Spring 1964).

Wolcott, Harry F. A Kwakiutl Village and School. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967.